

(1) 'Cautious Optimism'...

spurred by the ceasefire as well as growing regional and diplomatic support for a peace process in Afghanistan.

Votel believes these indicators are more important of the mood in Afghanistan than the traditional measures of security used by the U.S. military.

Those metrics show that Afghan government forces still face a tough fight against the Taliban. For example, only two-thirds of Afghanistan's major population centers are under the full control of the Afghan government and the Taliban continues to carry out attacks throughout the country.

In an interview with ABC News and the Wall Street Journal en route to Afghanistan Votel noted that while those metrics remain important he is looking at the South Asia strategy as a whole to measure whether it's working.

"To me what we're working towards is the assessment of the overall strategy. Are we on a strategy that is going to move us in the right direction?" said Votel. "My assessment is, we are cautiously optimistic, that we are moving this in the right direction."

That includes progress in parts of the South Asia strategy like regionalization where Gulf countries and others in the region are building diplomatic pressure to support peace talks. Building on the success of last month's ceasefire, President Ashraf Ghani's government has indicated it may carry out another unilateral ceasefire next month.

General Nicholson supports the idea of another unilateral ceasefire despite the potential security risks that might come with it. "The overall strategic objective of advancing the peace process in our view is worth the tactical risk," said Nicholson.

Despite the cautious optimism that the strategy is working General Votel remains realistic "that there is a lot of work left to be done."

"There will be more fighting. There will be potential setbacks, but the momentum is moving in the right direction under our strategy," said Votel. "We are absolutely committed to moving forward." (abc news)

(2) Operations in...

The neighbours agreed jointly explore the possibility of undertake connectivity and energy projects like CPEC, TAPI, CASA 1000, Kabul-Peshawar Motorway and the Chaman-Kandahar rail track.

Plans for early and dignified return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan were also discussed at the inaugural meetings of working groups. Islamabad will host the next rounds. (Pajhwok)

(3) EU, UN to Build...

The houses would be built after a special survey and creation of a database. Hayat tasked the provincial land authority and municipality to launch the survey and share the outcome with the governor's house.

According to Khogyani, the governor assured the UN HABITAT programme director of all possible cooperation in implementing the project. (Pajhwok)

(4) Chinese Embassy...

Director of International Relations Department of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, praised the supports of the People's Republic of China to Afghanistan "Though China has a tiny border with Afghanistan, but it is a big

neighbor of us," he said. (Outlook Afghanistan)

(5) Traders Continue to...

polluted. He linked the air pollution to increased population, rise in vehicles and lack of green areas.

He asked officials concerned to ban materials at customs that caused air pollution.

Mazar-i-Sharif mayor, Nasir Ahmad Aini, said they were trying to revive green areas in the city.

He also asked people to cooperate in protecting the environment protection and clean streams passing in front of their houses. (Pajhwok)

(6) Peace Activists...

the gesture is to show that Pakistan has always used one of our hands in Afghanistan and has stained our other hand with blood. It means that it (Pakistan) has given guns to one Afghan brother to kill another Afghan with that same gun," Watandost said.

Abdul Ali, a member of the movement, said he joined the group almost 20 days ago.

Ali only completed Grade 6 at school and said his children have also been deprived of an education due to the war in their area in Helmand province.

"War has damaged our business and our agriculture. It cannot grow when there is war. We live in a situation where there is no school," he said.

The original members of the peace movement launched a sit-in protest in Lashkargah city in Helmand after a deadly car bomb was detonated outside a sports stadium in the city.

A few weeks later, eight protesters embarked on a 38-day walk to Kabul to carry a message of peace. After covering almost 700km, the group had grown and by the time they reached Kabul on June 18 they numbered around 100.

But their actions have taken a toll on them and some said their families are now facing financial problems.

Abdul Malik Hamdard, a member of the movement, said he has not paid the rent of his Helmand house for five months and has been told to vacate the property. "I will not be hurt even if my family is sacrificed for this purpose. Peace is our purpose," he said.

"Those who accompanied us from the beginning, have left their businesses and shops and their families are facing problems. We thought that our problems would be solved by such a move but now we see that our problems have doubled," said Mohammad Nekzad, who controls the movement's finances.

The movement has so far held sit-in protests outside the UN's office as well as US, Russian and Pakistani embassies in Kabul. (Tolo news)

(7) Not Regretting...

and resolving the issue of unemployment, Abdullah said the government of national unity also had some achievements.

He promised to consider the recommendations of the group and would instruct the relevant authorities to take necessary steps to resolve the existing issues. (KP)

(8) Afghanistan...

from 60 countries had taken part. The Korean Open International Taekwondo Championships ended late on Monday evening, three days after the Championships kicked off in Jeju. (KP)

(9) NSA Expected...

Dhabi on Monday, leading a high-ranking delegation.

The meeting is being held between national security advisors of Afghanistan, United States, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Meanwhile, officials from the High Peace Council (HPC) have expressed hope that the meeting will help accelerate the peace process with the Taliban.

"We hope that the meeting helps to speed up the peace process so that it is started under the ownership of the Afghan government and the High Peace Council," said HPC spokesman Sayed EhsanTahiri.

The US, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are said to be among the key countries which can bring the Taliban to the negotiations table.

"Any effort which is taken for peace is a step forward and these efforts will yield an outcome one day, however we can not be very optimistic in the short term period, but the efforts will have some impact," said political analyst Mohammad Eshaq Atmar.

This is the second meeting between the national security advisors from the four countries. The last such meeting was in March in Washington between the national security advisors of the four countries.

At the time, the National Security Council said Atmar held a four-day quadrilateral meeting and discussed the fight against terrorism, the Afghan peace process and the country's economic development.

Participants at the meeting expressed their support for the peace process in Afghanistan, emphasizing the need for joint efforts and practical steps in order to achieve success.

National security advisers have decided to identify the issue of terrorist financing and to take common action to eliminate them, the NSC said at the time. At this meeting, consultations and shared responsibilities were discussed about a specific mechanism needed among the four countries. (Tolo news)

(10) Drug Addicts'...

the 30-bed rehabilitation center, said they kept an addicted person for one and a half months before being discharged and returned to a normal life.

But some addicts after being treated returned to the old habit of using drugs again, he said, adding it was hard to know the exact number of women addicted to drugs.

He said an 80-bed rehab center was needed to cope with the situation and the idea had been shared with the Ministry of Public Health. About 900 people have been treated in the 30-bed center so far, he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(11) Over 70...

in connection with the incidents. After complaints received against officials in Achin district, one of them was arrested and was being investigated. The residents had been asked to register their complaints with the government against security officials.

The governor said more than 70 security officials had been arrested over negligence and other issues.

On the other hand, Provincial Council (PC) members and experts criticized the governor's steps for security of Nangarhar. They said if removing officials was a solution, then the governor and the police chief should

be arrested and investigated.

Rohullah Lalpur, a political affairs expert, believed special strategies, planning, appointment of qualified personnel were needed to improve security besides creating security belts.

He stressed the need for improved coordination and communication between the governor, security institutions, civil society activists and tribal elders to improve the security situation.

Over the past two months, around 41 security officials have either been removed or transferred. (Pajhwok)

(12) 7 Wounded...

the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul claimed the lives of at least 27 people and wounded over 100.

The incident happened a half hour after First Vice President General Abdul Rashid Dostum arrived back in the country after having spent 13 months in Turkey.

A suicide bomber detonated his explosives at the circle at the main entrance of the airport just minutes after Dostum's convoy had driven past. (Tolo news)

(13) AFP Driver...

According to RSF's tally, a total of 37 journalists and media workers have been killed in Afghanistan since the start of 2016 in bombings and other acts of violence by the country's two leading press freedom predators, Islamic State and the Taliban.

Afghanistan is ranked 118th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2018 World Press Freedom Index. (Pajhwok)

(14) Taliban Shadow...

surrounded the village and try to disarm the fighters of these commanders, he added.

Taliban did not comment yet on the incident. (Pajhwok)

(15) Dozens of ...

were killed and 23 others wounded in a retaliatory attack by the security forces.

Siyal said four policemen were also killed and seven others wounded in the fighting. However, another official revealed 17 Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers were also killed and several others wounded.

Meanwhile, the Taliban claimed capturing the district and inflicting casualties on dozens of Afghan forces. (Pajhwok)

China Donates Electronic, IT Equipment to Cambodia's Diplomacy Institute

PHNOM PENH - China on Tuesday donated electronic and information technology (IT) equipment worth 75,500 U.S. dollars to the newly-established National Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations (NIDIR) of the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Chinese Ambassador to Cambodia Xiong Bo delivered the equipment to Foreign Ministry under-secretary of state and NIDIR's president ChhivYiseang here under the presence of Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak-Sokhonn.

Xiong said China is very delighted to see that Cambodia is playing a greater role in regional and international affairs and is carrying out its diplomacy very well. "It is our firm belief that with the establishment of NIDIR, it will nurture more competent and excellent diplomats for Cambodia and will make a positive and greater contribution to the de-

velopment of Cambodia's diplomatic course," he said.

The ambassador said China is ready to enhance exchanges and cooperation between the two foreign ministries and the two foreign affairs institutes of the two countries.

As 2018 marked the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Xiong said the two countries had organized a number of celebratory events in both Phnom Penh and Beijing and those events had been attended by respective leaders of the two countries and had drawn attention worldwide. "I think in the next 60 years, the mutual political trust between our two leaders, the mutual beneficial cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative between our two countries, and the friendship between our two peoples will be further consolidated and deepened," he said.

"It is our firm belief that Cambodia will maintain its peace, stability, and development, and it will surely embrace a brighter future," the ambassador said. (Xinhua)

Trump Considers Removing Security Clearance of Obama-Era Officials

WASHINGTON - The White House said Monday that U.S. President Donald Trump is considering scrapping the security clearance of six former U.S. intelligence officials, a move seen by his critics as retaliation against political opponents.

"They've politicized and in some cases monetized their public service and security clearances," White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said in a press briefing, referring to the intelligence officials. "Making baseless accusations of improper contact with Russia, or being influenced by Russia, against the president is extremely inappropriate and the fact that people with security clearances are making these baseless charges provides inappropriate legitimacy to accusations with zero evidence," she said.

According to Sanders, those among Trump's targets are former Central Intelligence Agency Directors John Brennan and Michael Hayden, former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director James Comey, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, former National Security Adviser Susan Rice and former Deputy FBI Director Andrew McCabe.

After his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, Trump received widespread criticism from the intelligence community as he appeared to side with Putin rather than the U.S. intelligence community on whether Russia meddled with the U.S. elections in 2016.

Trump later clarified that he "stood with" U.S. intelligence agencies and that his remarks at a joint press conference with Putin were misquoted.

One of the vocal critics of Trump's position was Brennan, who commented publicly what Trump said was "nothing short of treasonous." Sanders denied that revoking the officials' clearance was a way of retaliation against criticism, but to prevent them from "politicizing" and "monetizing" their privileges. "The president doesn't like the fact that people are politicizing agencies and departments that are specifically meant to not be political," Sanders said, also battling off assertions that Trump himself was "politicizing" the issue. (Xinhua)